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U. S. IMPROVES DUCK
REFUGE IN NEBRASKA

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The U. S. Biological Survey is continuing its work of developing and improving the Crescent Lake Wildlife Refuge, in Garden county, Nebr.

This refuge, about 40 miles southeast of Alliance and 30 miles north of Oshkosh, includes 42,629 acres in the lake region of the Nebraska sand-hills. All but a small portion was acquired by purchase with funds made available under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of February, 1929, and Federal title to it secured between 1931 and 1933. Further acreage is contemplated, in order to include important resting, nesting, and feeding lakes just outside the present boundaries.

In April, 1936, estimates indicated there were at least 55,000 ducks on the refuge at this peak time of waterfowl migration, representing an 80 percent increase over the number for the corresponding period of the previous year.

During the summer following, a census showed the principal species to be, in this order, coots, blue-winged teal, shovelers, mallards, ruddy ducks, pintails, redheads, gadwalls, canvasbacks, baldpates, lesser scaup, green-winged teal--all nesting on the refuge. Large numbers of Canada and snow geese stop at the refuge during migration, and ring-necked pheasants and prairie-chickens are to be found over the entire area. Muskrats are common on most of the lakes; and antelope are seen frequently about the refuge, with occasionally some coming within its boundaries. An extensive nesting and predator study was also undertaken on the refuge

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last summer, and from it methods and plans for increasing the supply of waterfowl and controlling some predators were developed.

With the beginning of a W.P.A. program on the refuge in August, 1936, one of the major projects for improving waterfowl habitat was the construction of nesting islands. Two "peninsulas", extending into Gimlet Lake, were severed from the mainland by dredging, resulting in two excellent breeding islands, about 250 feet long and 300 feet wide, for waterfowl and marsh birds. At the far tip of each island a triangle-shaped "resting point" and source for grit for the birds, was constructed of gravel. These islands, separated from the mainland by a depth of 4 to 5 feet of water, are comparatively safe from predatory mammals.

In the last part of 1936, W.P.A. workers completed landscaping the headquarters site; constructed a model type concrete cave for storing seeds harvested on the refuge; graded and cleared over 10 miles of minor roads on the area; and fenced some 8 miles of refuge boundary along the main highway. Partially completed were a 100-foot lookout and observation tower near the headquarters site, a new machine shed, and a program of razing and salvaging materials from an old C.C.C. camp.

Under a recent supplemental allotment, including the completion of projects under way, will be construction of several more nesting islands in Gimlet Lake, planting a score of ponds with suitable food and cover seeds, gravel highway construction and repair, and placing boundary signs. A progress report from Crescent Lake on May 1 indicated that all available labor was being used in an extensive program of spring tree-planting on the refuge.